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THE CHALLENGE OF FINANCING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN GREAT CITIES.

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The public school systems in the great cities of America face a crucial challenge to provide the kind of education which is necessary to meet the social, economic, and technological changes of today. The challenge cannot be met without the renewed and continuing determination by the citizens. It cannot be met without adequate financial support to provide the school systems with the necessary personnel, facilities, and materials to accomplish the task expected of them.

The Research Council of the Great Cities for School Improvement Program makes five recommendations concerning school finances:

1) That the cost of providing an adequate educational program for all children be the responsibility of the local, state, and federal governments.

2) That state financial support programs recognize differences in costs for kindergartens, elementary and secondary general education programs, trade and technical education, and programs for handicapped children; and that provisions for summer school, evening school, and other extension programs be on the same base as regular day school programs.

3) That building aid be provided for all types of school districts, with full consideration given to variations in the cost of school sites and construction.

4) That the local school tax base be expanded.

5) That state or federal support recognize that the local ability to finance public education is reduced in school districts in which the costs for non-school governmental services are relatively high.

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THE CHALLENGE OF FINANCING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN GREAT CITIES

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THE CHALLENGE OF

FINANCING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN GREAT CITIES

This statement was produced as the result of a report to the Board of Directors of the Research Council of the Great Cities Program for School Improvement from:

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PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

THE RESEARCH COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITIES

RECOMMENDS

I. That the cost of providing an adequate educational program for all children be the responsibility of the local, state and federal governments; the local share being determined by ability to pay with due consideration given to the total tax burden on the local community; the state share being in proportion to local effort and of sufficient amount to prevent overburdening local support; the federal share being a supplement to the local and state shares in providing for programs that are in the national interest or for pupils who are a federal responsibility.

II. That state financial support programs recognize differences in costs for kindergartens, elementary and secondary general education programs, trade and technical education, and programs for handicapped children; and that provisions for summer school, evening school, and other extension programs be on the same basis as for regular day school programs.

III. That building aid be provided for all types of school districts, with full consideration given to variations in the cost of school sites and construction.

IV. That the local school tax base be expanded.

V. That State or Federal support recognize that the local ability to finance public education is reduced in school districts in which the costs for non-school governmental purposes are relatively high.

The public school systems in the Great Cities of America face a crucial challenge to provide the kind of education which is necessary to meet the social, economic and technological changes taking place today in America. This challenge cannot be met without a renewed and continuing determination by the citizens. It cannot be met without adequate financial support to provide the school systems with the necessary personnel, facilities and materials to accomplish the task expected of them.

In 1963 The Research Council of the Great Cities Program for School Improvement published a statement on the desirable policies underlying adequate financial support of public education entitled "FISCAL POLICIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN AMERICA." The present statement is an expansion of that declaration. It seeks to portray statistically the problems involved in financial support of the public schools in the nation's great cities.

RECOMMENDATION I:

That the cost of providing an adequate educational program for all children be the responsibility of the local, state and federal governments; the local share being determined by ability to pay with due consideration given to the total tax burden on the local community; the state share being in proportion to local effort and of sufficient amount to prevent overburdening local support; the federal share being a supplement to the local and state shares in providing for programs that are in the national interest or for pupils who are a federal responsibility.

Financial support for the public schools in the nation's great cities comes mainly from the local property taxes as indicated in Tables 1. and 2.

Table 1

PERCENT OF LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL REVENUE DERIVED FROM THE PROPERTY TAX 1963-64

	Percent of Total Local Revenue
Chicago	100.0%
Cleveland	100.0
Los Angeles	100.0
New York	100.0
Boston	99.7
Detroit	99.5
San Francisco	99.0
Houston	96.0
Baltimore	93.9
Philadelphia	89.8
Milwaukee	84.7
St.Louis	83.9
Pittsburgh	72.9
Buffalo	71.6

The Great Cities are paying more of the cost of education locally, and receiving a smaller proportion of state and federal support than other school districts within their respective states. Table 2 illustrates the financial situation of the cities by comparing the sources of revenue of the Great Cities, with the sources of revenue for all public schools in the respective state. Twelve of the fifteen Great Cities are paying well over 60% of the cost of operating their schools from local revenues. Two cities are burdened with supporting 89% and 92% of the school cost locally. In only four of eleven states in which the Great Cities are located, is the state responsible for more than 33% of the schools' operating budget. The state share also includes Federal funds such as those for vocational education, which are channeled through state offices. Less than one percent of the public schools' budget in each of these cities comes from the Federal government, with only two exceptions: Washington, D. C. derives its funds through Congressional actions; Philadelphia is a federally impacted area and derives 2.2% of its budget from Federal sources. The major financial support for the public schools is still the local community.

Table 2

SOURCES OF REVENUE*
FOR GREAT CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1963-64,
AND FOR ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE RESPECTIVE STATE

	Local Support		State Support		Federal Support		Other
	City	State**	City	State**	City	State**	City
Boston	92.1%	(71.0%)	7.3%	(24.1%)	0.3%	(4.9%)	0.3%
Milwaukee	88.8	(73.3)	10.4	(23.9)	0.8	(2.8)	0.0
Cleveland	78.6	(74.9)	18.7	(22.7)	0.6	(2.4)	2.1
Chicago	77.7	(77.4)	19.3	(19.8)	0.7	(2.8)	2.3
Pittsburgh	76.1	(55.0)	21.6	(42.0)	0.6	(3.0)	1.7
St.Louis	72.4	(62.5)	25.9	(34.9)	0.1	(2.6)	1.6
San Francisco	69.8	(56.7)	26.3	(39.8)	0.5	(3.5)	3.4
Los Angeles	69.5	(56.7)	27.9	(39.8)	0.4	(3.5)	2.2
Philadelphia	66.3	(55.0)	30.8	(42.0)	2.2	(3.0)	0.7
Baltimore	65.7	(58.6)	33.7	(35.9)	0.4	(5.5)	0.2
New York	64.5	(54.1)	32.7	(44.2)	0.5	(1.7)	2.3
Detroit	62.3	(54.5)	36.9	(42.8)	0.4	(2.7)	0.4
Houston	55.0	(44.6)	44.0	(52.3)	0.0	(3.1)	1.0
Buffalo	49.7	(54.1)	49.7	(44.2)	0.6	(1.7)	0.0

*Excluding building bonds and school lunch funds.
**State data from: U.S. Office of Education, *Digest of Educational Statistics*, 1963 Edition, Table 31. Data is for 1962-63 fiscal year.

RECOMMENDATION II:

That state financial support programs recognize differences in costs for kindergarten, elementary and secondary general education programs, trade and technical education, and programs for handicapped* children; and that provisions for summer school, evening school, and other extension programs be on the same basis as for regular day school programs.

The sharp differences in cost between elementary and high school instruction, and the still greater costs of vocational and special education are revealed in Table 3 which summarizes the findings of the Research Council of the Great Cities Program for School Improvement. Revealing as these cost ratios are in themselves, their full significance cannot be understood until they are applied to school budgets.

As indicated by Table 3 the per pupil cost of the academic high school program is one-third more than the amount spent per elementary pupil. Vocational and technical programs cost 80% more per pupil than does elementary, while providing for the handicapped child is more than twice as expensive as for the regular elementary pupil.

*Handicapped includes all mentally retarded and physically handicapped pupils in special classes. Recognition for support purposes should also be given for other handicapped children, such as socially maladjusted in those cities having such programs.

Table 3

COST RATIO AND AVERAGE COST PER PUPIL BY INSTRUCTION AREAS 1962-63

	Cost Ratio	Average Cost Per Pupil
1. Kindergarten	0.49	$199.89
2. Elementary	1.00	408.20
3. Junior High School	1.20	489.69
4. Academic High School	1.34	544.97
5. Vocational, Trade, and Technical High Schools	1.81	737.00
6. Handicapped	2.13	867.80

NOTE: Information in Table 3 includes all of the Great Cities except Washington, D. C.

Table 4 dramatically demonstrates that the higher cost of special and vocational education programs are largely concentrated in major cities. The average Great City has only 18.5% of the total state enrollment, yet is serving 27.2% of the handicapped, and 52.3% of the vocational, trade, and technical school enrollments of the state. This situation can be expected to persist. Automation and other technological developments are having major impacts in large urban centers and the large cities continue to attract thousands of in-migrants with many children who can only be effectively served by special education programs. Public schools will be compelled to expand and adapt their vocational, trade and technical programs at an even more rapid pace in the years ahead if the schools are to continue to serve their communities effectively. The greatest burden in this costly adjustment to modern technology will fall on the public schools of the nation's large cities, where the competition for tax dollars is becoming increasingly severe.

Table 4

ENROLLMENT PATTERNS—1962-63

	Total Enrollment		Vocational, Trade & Technical Schools		Handicapped Classes	
	K-12	Percent of State	Enrolled	Percent of State	Enrolled	Percent of State
Maryland	667,528		3,254		17,185	
Baltimore	180,032	26.9%	3,254	100.0%	11,326	65.9%
Massachusetts**	918,389		14,633		33,569	
Boston**	94,578	10.3%	3,258	22.2%	1,993	6.0%
New York State	2,945,000		56,160		42,421	
Buffalo	71,837	2.4%	5,786	10.3%	2,199	5.2%
Illinois*	1,623,160		37,159		17,458	
Chicago*	423,518	26.1%	21,866	58.9%	10,670	61.1%
Ohio	2,080,134		5,089		3,538	
Cleveland	144,047	6.9%	3,154	61.9%	1,107	31.1%
Michigan	1,794,045		7,060		28,991	
Detroit	292,104	16.3%	6,805	96.4%	8,488	29.3%
Texas	2,200,186		-	-	15,231	
Houston	185,639	8.4%	-	-	1,798	11.8%
California	3,740,165		-	-	66,887	
Los Angeles	577,092	15.4%	-	-	15,787	23.6%
Wisconsin**	781,383		-	-	11,414	
Milwaukee**	115,819	14.8%	-	-	2,635	23.1%
New York	2,945,000		56,160		42,421***	
New York City	1,027,426	34.9%	40,223	71.6%	21,434***	50.5%
Pennsylvania	2,170,800		49,559		45,308	
Philadelphia	264,290	12.2%	5,692	11.5%	10,425	23.0%
Pennsylvania	2,170,800		49,559		45,308	
Pittsburgh	76,094	3.5%	2,681	5.4%	2,535	5.6%
Missouri	888,349		4,941		34,679	
St.Louis	108,059	12.1%	3,345	67.6%	3,821	11.0%
California	3,740,165		-	-	66,887	
San Francisco	94,162	2.5%	-	-	1,044	1.6%

*1961-62
**1963-64
***Statistics include handicapped pupil enrollment only for those pupils in ungraded classes.

RECOMMENDATION III:

That building aid be provided for all types of school districts, with full consideration given to variations in the cost of school sites and construction.

The cost of sites in large cities is many times that of sites in other districts. As shown in Table 5, the average cost for all school sites purchased over the five year period reported was $68,156 per acre for the Great Cities, in contrast to the $3,074 per acre average for the sample of other districts in the states represented. (Metropolitan, suburban, and rural school districts were included in the sample.)

Table 5

SCHOOL SITE COSTS PER ACRE FOR THE LAST 5 YEARS 1958-1963*

	Average Cost Per Acre
Average for sampling of other school districts in these states	$ 3,074
Average for 14 Great Cities	68,156
New York	197,841
Chicago	136,927
Buffalo	125,741
St.Louis	112,081
Cleveland	108,009
San Francisco	96,754
Boston	74,620
Pittsburgh	71,975
Los Angeles	68,000
Philadelphia **	67,344
Detroit	64,909
Baltimore	39,300
Milwaukee	29,181
Houston	5,692

*Average is for most recent 5 year period for which data is available.
**4 year average

These substantial differences in school site costs between the large cities and other districts constitute a handicap in providing adequate facilities in the districts with higher costs.

Construction costs and restrictive municipal building codes are additional factors which contribute to the high cost of school plants in large cities and should be recognized in provisions for financial support.

Procedures for authorizing bond issues and expenditures for school construction should be simplified to eliminate unnecessary delays and obstacles. A simple majority of those voting should be sufficient to pass bond issues; fourteen states require more than this for approval. Bond issue defeats are highest in these states, according to a recent report by the U. S. Office of Education. The Research Council's publication **FISCAL POLICIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN AMERICA**, states that "Local boards of education should be free from unreasonable restrictions in the administration of fiscal affairs . . . and from cumbersome legal procedures at state and local levels which thwart effective expression of citizens."

RECOMMENDATION IV:

That the local school tax base be expanded.

As mentioned earlier in this report, "Financial support for the public schools in the nation's major cities comes mainly from local property taxes." Over a five year period, the source of local property taxes, taxable assessed valuation, has actually decreased in some cities. Where there has been an increase in taxable assessed valuation, the percent of increase in the cities is less than that for the rest of the state. To state it another way, without exception, the tax base in the city has decreased in relation to the remainder of the state in which this city is located. This is not merely a change but a well defined trend.

Table 6

FIVE YEAR CHANGE IN TAXABLE ASSESSED VALUATION

	Percent of Change Over a 5 Year Period*	
	Cities	State (Minus Cities Listed)
Baltimore	-10.5%	37.2%
Boston	- 1.2	Not Available
Buffalo	- 1.0	47.5
Chicago	7.1	13.3
Cleveland	3.4	17.2
Detroit	- 2.0	20.3
Houston	21.6	36.0
Los Angeles	24.4	32.7
Milwaukee	5.8	22.4
New York City	40.5	47.5
Philadelphia	2.8	25.5
Pittsburgh	6.5	25.5
St.Louis	1.1	15.0
San Francisco	14.2	32.7

*Change is for the most recent 5 year period for which data is available.

The loss of taxable assessed valuation, relative to the rest of the state, when coupled with the exploding school population in the cities indicates that the large city school systems are in the midst of a financial crisis. Without access to additional revenue these cities cannot meet the increasingly complex educational needs with which they are faced.

The public schools in the great cities have shown a tremendous growth in enrollments since World War II. Analysis of the enrollments of fourteen cities included in Table 7 shows growth from 2,765,337 in 1950 to 3,890,466 in 1963 and a conservative projection of 4,109,632 for 1965. This is an increase of 48.6% between 1950 and 1965. The problem of financing the public schools in the Great Cities becomes ever more critical as the enrollments rise.

Table 7

PUBLIC SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP
On or About October 1

	1950	1963	1965*	Percent of Increase 1950-1965
Baltimore	118,087	185,498	195,682	65.7%
Boston	91,577	94,578	97,948	7.0
Buffalo	65,565	73,228	76,344	16.4
Chicago	336,377	536,163	576,893	57.2
Cleveland	99,686	150,474	161,528	62.0
Detroit	232,230	294,527	300,675	29.5
Houston	95,757	205,155	223,761	133.7
Los Angeles	310,550	589,517	630,559	103.0
Milwaukee	69,163	115,819	123,889	79.1
New York City	879,315	1,046,523	1,086,407	23.6
Philadelphia	216,610	271,370	287,758	32.8
Pittsburgh	69,189	77,531	80,273	16.0
St.Louis	78,600	112,365	119,351	36.2
San Francisco	68,393	95,075	97,783	43.0
Washington,D.C.	93,631	137,718	148,564	58.7
Grand Totals	2,765,337	3,890,466	4,109,632	48.6%

*Projected by the Research Council. The average annual increase for 1963 to 1965 was assumed to be the same as the average annual increase for 1960 to 1963.

The taxable assessed valuation is not keeping pace with the growth in pupil population and school costs in many communities. In fact, the tax base per pupil over the past five years has decreased in 10 of the 14 cities listed in Table 8, while during the same period it has increased in 8 of the 10 states reporting.

Table 8

FIVE YEAR CHANGES IN PER PUPIL TAXABLE ASSESSED VALUATION

	Percent of Change Over a 5 Year Period*	
	Cities	State (Minus Cities Listed)
Baltimore	-19.3%	10.2%
Boston	- 5.3	Not Available
Buffalo	- 8.6	26.1
Chicago	- 6.0	- 0.2
Cleveland	- 9.9	4.2
Detroit	- 5.7	3.4
Houston	- 2.8	18.9
Los Angeles	5.1	5.6
Milwaukee	- 9.6	- 1.1
New York City	32.4	26.1
Philadelphia	- 0.6	13.6
Pittsburgh	2.2	13.6
St.Louis	-10.6	3.1
San Francisco	5.9	5.6

*Change is for the most recent 5 year period for which data is available.

The large cities are in a position where they must increase the tax rate just to maintain their present educational programs. This leaves little or nothing in their budgets for improvement and often results in curtailment of programs because pupils are being added and costs are increasing while the total dollars available per pupil dwindle.

RECOMMENDATION V:

That State or Federal support recognize that the local ability to finance public education is reduced for school districts in which the costs of other governmental services are relatively high.

Table 9 shows the proportion of the property tax revenue that is being expended for other services in the Great Cities as compared with the balance of the state in which these cities are located.

The percent of revenue derived from the property tax by local governmental units other than school districts in the Great Cities is as much as three times that taken by the average local non-school governments of the state in which they are located.

Table 9

PERCENT OF PROPERTY TAX LEVIED BY NON-SCHOOL GOVERNMENTS

	City	Average of Other Local Governments Within the State
Baltimore	67%	Not Available
Boston	73	73%
Buffalo	76	49
Chicago	60	44
Cleveland	58	Not Available
Detroit	57	48
Houston	64	Not Available
Los Angeles	54	49
Milwaukee	66	47
New York City	77	49
Philadelphia	58	22
Pittsburgh	61	22
St.Louis	51	Not Available
San Francisco	71	49

The table above illustrates the fact that in these cities from 51 to 77 cents of every property tax dollar goes for non-school services. In nine of the fourteen cities the non-school share is 60 percent or more, while the average local non-school government is taking less than 50 percent of the property tax dollar and some as little as 22 percent.

An example of this problem is well illustrated by the situation of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Of each dollar paid by a resident of Pittsburgh for property taxes, 61 cents goes to non-school governmental units. In the average Pennsylvania community only 22 cents of the property tax dollar is used by non-school services. This is only about one-third the size of Pittsburgh's share. The difference of 39 cents per dollar, or 39 percent of the total tax revenue, that is used by the non-school governmental units in the large city represents, in part, an extra burden that must be borne by large city residents to support services not provided in other communities. This "municipal overburden" is provided at the expense of education, and constitutes a serious limitation on the local ability to support public schools.

The cost and number of governmental services, other than education, tend to increase with the size of a district and reach very large proportions in the major cities where many services are rendered to non-residents as well as to residents. Police and fire protection, sanitation services, welfare programs, maintenance of streets and expressways, parks, museums and zoos are only a few examples of the services to which a greater portion of the large city tax dollar must be committed than in most other communities. The ability of the large city to support education is thus reduced.

THE CONCLUSION

The recommendations presented in this report are guides for citizens who wish to take resolute action in ways they deem appropriate and effective through their local, state and federal levels of government. As guidelines they are directed at the solution of the fiscal problems in the large cities. They possess flexibility for the development of procedures best suited to meet the variable problems among these cities. The principles underlying these recommendations are applicable to all public school systems in the nation.

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